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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 38th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. MONGBE (Benin)

later: Mr. ARELLANO (Mexico)
(Vice-Chairman)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

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REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF GENERAL ASSEMBLY RESOLUTION 47/191 ON THE INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS TO FOLLOW UP THE UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT (continued) (A/48/442)

(a) ELABORATION OF AN INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION TO COMBAT DESERTIFICATION IN THOSE COUNTRIES EXPERIENCING SERIOUS DROUGHT AND/OR DESERTIFICATION, PARTICULARLY IN AFRICA (continued) (A/48/226 and Add.1, A/48/564)

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(c) SUSTAINABLE USE AND CONSERVATION OF THE MARINE LIVING RESOURCES OF THE HIGH SEAS: UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON STRADDLING FISH STOCKS AND HIGHLY MIGRATORY FISH STOCKS (continued) (A/48/479)

1. Mr. RAZALI (Malaysia) expressed concern over the general response to the recommendations made and commitments undertaken at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development regarding the implementation of Agenda 21. At its first session, the Commission on Sustainable Development had gone beyond organizational issues, adopting seven important decisions and establishing ad hoc working groups on finance and technology, the financial implications of which would shortly be discussed in the Fifth Committee. The Economic and Social Council had endorsed the report of the session, and financial support was now needed to implement the Commission's decisions. The difficult decision to establish the two working groups had been prompted by the failure by States to meet commitments relating to additional finance and concessional transfers of technology. He appealed to Member States to support the working groups and to refrain from impeding the work of the Commission.

2. Member States must demonstrate political will to effect the broad social and economic changes that were needed to reverse adverse trends affecting the environment and development. The concept of development in both the developed

(Mr. Razali, Malaysia)

and developing countries had been permanently changed in the wake of the Rio Conference. As increasing importance was being attached to the implementation of Agenda 21 by the academic community, think-tanks, industry and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), the efforts of such groups should be integrated into the activities of the Commission and of the Organization. However, given the absence of clear commitments on the part of the developed countries, it must be asked whether the United Nations could or would act on the decisions taken at the Conference.

3. The current world economic order placed the developing countries at a disadvantage. The ecological crisis required global economic adjustment, with the developed countries bearing the brunt of the burden, since they had been mainly responsible for resource depletion and pollution. Such adjustment should be achieved by a reform of international economic institutions and a reduction of the current massive financial flows from the developing to the developed countries, as well as an improvement in the developing countries' terms of trade and a resolution of their debt crisis. Many developed countries had recently announced cut-backs in foreign aid, and the resources available under the Global Environment Facility (GEF) had been drastically reduced. Furthermore, the mandates of United Nations agencies were being broadened while their resources were stagnating. If the target of 0.7 per cent of gross national product (GNP) for official development assistance (ODA) was not met, some developing countries might be forced to ignore the commitments they had made at Rio de Janeiro. Environmental issues must be linked to social equity and the alleviation of poverty.

4. The effectiveness of GEF as a financial mechanism to address global environmental problems would depend on the current restructuring exercise. GEF should focus on the mobilization and efficient use of resources and ensure effective and equitable representation on its governing body. It should also reflect enhanced coordination between the United Nations and the Bretton Woods institutions. The recessionary trend in resource commitment for the restructured Facility raised questions as to the international community's readiness to address global environmental issues. The forthcoming GEF meeting at Cartagena should make that commitment clear.

5. Innovative financial mechanisms were needed to offset the increasing shortfall in resources for the implementation of Agenda 21. Some interesting proposals had been put forward, and the United Nations was well placed to deal with such matters. Transnational corporations should also be actively involved in the implementation of innovative financial mechanisms. He hoped that the High-Level Advisory Board on Sustainable Development would make specific and pragmatic proposals on that issue.

6. In addition to the private sector, Governments had an important role to play in the transfer of environmentally sound technologies. Some Governments had announced their intention to purchase the international proprietary rights to certain environmentally sound technologies and make them available to developing countries. Governments also had an important role to play in the transfer of publicly owned technologies. The transfer of environmentally sound technologies should include the removal of barriers and the provision of information, incentives, capacity-building and finance.

(Mr. Razali, Malaysia)

7. While his delegation supported the forthcoming World Summit for Social Development, the International Conference on Population and Development and the Fourth World Conference on Women, as well as the proposals for an agenda for development, he hoped that those initiatives would not marginalize, but rather reinforce and complement Agenda 21, and that sufficient resources would be forthcoming for the implementation of all of them. The eradication of poverty and inequities in the international system was crucial to the success of Agenda 21. Unsustainable patterns of consumption in the industrial countries and high rates of population growth in the developing countries must be moderated. Unsustainable levels of resource exploitation should be brought down, and fairer use should be made of shared resources, including the atmosphere and the high seas.

8. Some progress had been made on the issues of a convention on desertification, the Conferences on straddling and highly migratory fish stocks and the sustainable development of small island developing States, and implementation of the Conventions on the control of transboundary movements of hazardous wastes, climate change and biodiversity. However, his delegation was concerned at the state of negotiations in the areas of climate change and biodiversity, particularly with regard to the utilization of GEF as an interim financial mechanism, in view of the decrease in contributions. He urged the parties to ban all shipments of hazardous wastes, including those involving recycling from developed to developing countries.

9. Malaysia had included in its 1994 budget various incentives to encourage the use of unleaded petrol and catalytic converters, donations to environmental protection organizations and the planting of forests. Malaysia was prepared to work with other countries to implement the forest principles drawn up at Rio by 1994 and hoped to cooperate with all concerned for the full implementation of Agenda 21.

10. Mr. TÖPPER (Germany) said that cooperation in environmental and development matters would be crucial to the maintenance of peace in the future. The proposed agenda for development, the Agenda for Peace and Agenda 21 were central elements in that regard, while the Commission on Sustainable Development was a key political instrument for implementing them. He welcomed the progress made by the Commission thus far.

11. Analysis by the Commission of voluntary national reports was a prerequisite for further goal-oriented decisions by that body. Commission members should devise common indicators for sustainable development so that national efforts could be compared more easily. The Commission must also promote greater coordination within the United Nations system in the field of environment and development in order to bring the Organization's programmes and structures into line with the priorities of Agenda 21. The proposed special conferences to be held prior to the Commission's second session and the ad hoc working groups on financing and technology should develop specific proposals for action to be taken at that session.

(Mr. Töpper, Germany)

12. Many countries, including his own, had begun to adopt measures to implement the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Convention on Biological Diversity, which were about to enter into force. In the preparatory negotiations for the first conferences of States parties to those instruments his country was striving to ensure that decisions were taken for their implementation and further development. In that connection, Germany would continue to endeavour to reduce carbon dioxide emissions by 25 to 30 per cent from 1987 levels by the year 2005.

13. Further work was needed on the draft programme of action for the sustainable development of small island developing States in order to address their specific concerns and problems. It was also important to ensure that the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, to be held in Barbados in June 1994, was a success.

14. The negotiations on an international convention to combat desertification in those countries experiencing serious drought and/or desertification, particularly in Africa, had reached a difficult stage, and the clear mandate of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development and the General Assembly must be fulfilled. Although States should acknowledge the global geographical significance of desertification, particular attention must be directed to the plight of the affected African countries.

15. The first session of the United Nations Conference on Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks had highlighted possible compromise solutions for the protection and maintenance of those stocks. The rights and interests of all countries concerned should be taken into account, bearing in mind the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.

16. His delegation also hoped that the forthcoming International Conference on Population and Development and the World Summit for Social Development would yield considerable progress towards the goal of sustainable development.

17. Governments should not become bogged down in repetitive debate in the negotiations undertaken to follow up the Earth Summit, but ought instead to strive for the step-by-step translation of Agenda 21 into dynamic political action. The shared responsibility of industrialized and developing countries must always be borne in mind.

18. At its next session the Commission on Sustainable Development must consider the question of ecological structural change, particularly in the industrialized countries. In market economies, the integration of environmental costs into product prices would encourage manufacturers as well as consumers to move towards a more environmentally sound lifestyle. Ecologically fair prices also would stimulate the development of environmentally friendly and low-resource technology. The Commission should devise an appropriate mechanism for environmentally sound technology transfers, using, to the extent possible, traditional local technologies adapted to social and ecological conditions.

(Mr. Töpper, Germany)

19. He underscored the importance of capacity-building in the area of environment and development, to be achieved through support for the preparation of legislation, the creation of functioning administrations and the training of experts. At its second session, the Commission on Sustainable Development should agree on an adequate mechanism to ensure the efficient implementation of the forest principles adopted at the Rio Conference.

20. He acknowledged the disillusionment that had prevailed with regard to the flow of financial resources from North to South since the Conference. The limitation of available resources caused by the difficult world economic situation meant that donors and recipients must ensure that such resources were used efficiently. Governments must also display greater creativity and consider introducing such innovative instruments as environmental taxes and charges, to name but a few.

21. Every effort was being made to ensure that the replenishment and restructuring of GEF would be concluded by the end of the year in order to make substantial additional funding available for global environmental protection. A transparent and democratic decision-making structure must ensure that GEF provided a higher-quality financing mechanism for the conventions signed at Rio de Janeiro.

22. Public funding alone, however, would not be adequate: further private capital for sustainable development must be generated. Improved access to the markets of developed countries and improved terms of trade for developing countries would help the developing countries finance the tasks set out in Agenda 21. Failure to conclude the Uruguay Round of multilateral trade negotiations by the end of the year not only risked an increase in protectionism and the loss of resources, but also endangered the promising market-oriented policies that were being implemented in many developing countries. The Commission for Sustainable Development should press for agreement on clear and comprehensive international measures to promote a mutually supportive relationship between environment and trade. Such measures, which should be negotiated in the context of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) immediately following the successful conclusion of the Uruguay Round, must take development and environmental protection needs into account.

23. Recognizing that it was the responsibility of national Governments to implement Agenda 21, Germany was integrating ecological concerns in its economic and social policy, the objective being the sustainable development of the country within the European Union. It was to be hoped that the ecological reconstruction undertaken to create similar living standards in both parts of the country upon unification would encourage countries with economies in transition to tackle the massive clean-ups they, too, face. His country looked forward to further progress on the environment within the European Union and to expanding its efforts as a partner in global cooperation for sustainable development.

24. Mr. MAYCOCK (Barbados), speaking on agenda items 99 (a) and (b) on behalf of the 12 States members of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) said that the CARICOM Governments fully supported the call for the elaboration of an

(Mr. Maycock, Barbados)

international convention to combat desertification in those countries experiencing serious drought and/or desertification, particularly in Africa, and noted the significant progress made to date by the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee established for that purpose.

25. Some countries in the Caribbean subregion suffered the periodic effects of drought, exacerbated in recent times by climate change and variability. They were well aware of the catastrophic proportions of the problem of desertification, particularly in Africa, and were reminded of that problem every summer by airborne clouds of Saharan dust which deposited new and frequently destructive microbial particles on their crops. The members of CARICOM looked forward to the round of negotiations to be held in New York in January 1994 and to associating themselves with the eventual regime those negotiations would produce. They were flexible as to the structure such a regime should take, provided that it gave appropriate emphasis to the catastrophic dimensions of the problem of desertification in Africa while providing a balanced response to the needs of all countries affected by the problem. The CARICOM countries noted the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee's decision 2/1, which urged that an instrument on Africa should be negotiated once the main structure of the convention had been defined, and adopted as an integral part of the convention, and that similar instruments for other regions should be negotiated without delay. They also supported the Committee's recommendation that a session should be held after the adoption of the convention in order to review the situation pending its entry into force, in particular with regard to the implementation of provisions adapted to the specific needs of each region.

26. The mandate in General Assembly resolution 47/189 to convene the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States was of historic significance for the island nations of the United Nations and a matter of priority attention for the countries of the Caribbean Community. The process of defining the sustainable development needs of those States and recommending appropriate response strategies was well under way, and the members of CARICOM were heartened by the level of support shown for that process by the international community.

27. The CARICOM States welcomed the progress made by the Preparatory Committee for the Conference at its September session and believed that the constructive spirit of partnership that had prevailed augured well for a successful Conference that would demonstrate the seriousness with which those States took the commitments made at Rio. As considerable work was still required to make the draft programme of action for the sustainable development of small island developing States acceptable to all parties, the findings of the additional research to be carried out by the Secretariat should be considered prior to the Conference itself. Informal consultations on the text of a "Barbados declaration" would soon begin with a view to facilitating the negotiations on the text at the Conference itself. The Caribbean Community urged the General Assembly to endorse the Preparatory Committee's request to convene a resumed session of that body from 7 to 11 March 1994 for the purpose of advancing the negotiations on the outstanding sections of the draft programme of action.

(Mr. Maycock, Barbados)

28. The CARICOM Governments hoped that delegations to the Conference would be represented at the highest possible level, and they were confident that the Conference would produce concrete results and the institutional and other mechanisms necessary to translate those results into reality.

29. Mr. Arellano (Mexico), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.

30. Mr. AL-SANAD (Kuwait) said that the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development had significantly enlarged the mandate of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), thereby underscoring the importance of the environment for social and economic development. In that connection, he welcomed the report of the UNEP Governing Council on its seventeenth session (A/48/25).

31. The environment in the Gulf region had been seriously damaged by the Iraqi aggression against Kuwait. The torching of the oil wells in Kuwait had created some 240 lakes of oil over 1 metre deep covering large areas of land and desert and constituting a serious hazard to the environment and human health. The cleaning up of those sites would be complicated by the presence of live mines and ammunition beneath the oil. A recent report by a team of geologists from Boston University had stated that large areas of land had been transformed into a kind of asphalt which had caused serious harm to birds, plants and crops; the effects of that damage might continue for decades.

32. The oil fires and oil spills had also inflicted severe environmental damage on the atmosphere and the sea, and in particular fish stocks, necessitating intensive, long-term monitoring and research. Even though the last oil fire had been extinguished more than two years previously, its long-term impact was still unknown; detailed studies of the affected population would be required, with particular attention paid to respiratory problems.

33. The environmental catastrophe deliberately provoked by the Iraqi regime had thus had serious social and economic consequences, including loss of job opportunities, particularly in the fishing and agricultural sectors, and health hazards. His delegation therefore appealed for strengthened international cooperation to respond to that catastrophe. In that connection, he reiterated his delegation's support for UNEP Governing Council decision No. 17/7 and commended the pioneering role of UNEP in coordinating the efforts of the United Nations system to deal with the impact of the catastrophe.

34. Mr. Mongbe (Benin) resumed the Chair.

35. Archbishop MARTINO (Observer for the Holy See), speaking on agenda item 99, welcomed the substantial progress made in following up the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, in particular, the establishment of the Commission on Sustainable Development, the establishment of a framework for the elaboration of an international convention to combat desertification and the convening of the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States and the United Nations Conference on Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks.

(Archbishop Martino, Observer, Holy See)

36. Due consideration must be given to the ethical dimensions of problems affecting developing countries, and specifically the small island developing States. There were important issues of justice involved in working out equitable access to the resources and technologies needed for development and in allocating the inherent costs. His delegation considered it a duty respectfully and forcefully to remind all States of the fundamental primacy of the human person when they considered environment and development issues.

37. As the Conference on Environment and Development had amply demonstrated, the concept of sustainable development must be applied to developing and developed countries alike. The latter's frequently wasteful patterns of consumption must be avoided. Although his delegation applauded the efforts being made to change habits, attitudes and consumption patterns, much of those efforts unfortunately consisted of lip service rather than genuine, concerted action. In pursuing the goal of equitable development, the emphasis must remain on the human person: a happy life demanded the satisfaction of basic needs for food, shelter and health care and required an environment of peace in which people respected one another, values took precedence over objects and the human spirit could express its artistic and aesthetic capacities.

38. Mr. CAMPEAU (Canada) said that the creation of the Commission on Sustainable Development had been a first step towards the implementation of the sustainable development agenda. The Commission had taken a strong leadership role in the follow-up to the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development. One point emphasized at the first session of the Commission had been the importance of devising national sustainable development plans and strategies. Canada supported the suggestion made by New Zealand that a simplified approach to the Secretariat guidelines should be taken when requesting information from Governments on progress in follow-up to Conference recommendations. The Commission's multi-year thematic programme of work must respect linkages between development and environment issues. Canada also supported the decision to establish the Inter-Agency Committee on Sustainable Development and the high-level advisory board, whose roster of experts could play an important role in providing technical advice to numerous intergovernmental bodies.

39. Furthering the sustainable development agenda depended in large measure on local and national efforts, and obstacles to their implementation at the national level must be eased through international cooperation. Government policies, while important, could not by themselves protect the world's fragile ecosystems, but must be effectively implemented. Constructive partnerships must be established and strengthened to foster the sharing of information and to gain new energy and insight. Canada had found round-table discussions very effective in translating policy into action.

40. Almost two years after the Rio Conference, the challenges faced by many developing countries remained urgent. A sound programme of work offered little reassurance to those facing malnutrition and lack of access to basic necessities. Environmentally sound technology must be made available to those

(Mr. Campeau, Canada)

in need of it and better use must be made of existing resources. The fact that UNEP had been given a leadership role in many of the areas defined by Agenda 21 would ensure that environmental research led to a new scientific consensus. The forthcoming Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States would also serve as a test of the ability to translate words into action. The negotiations on an international convention to combat desertification should result in an effective instrument that would allow affected countries to focus their energy on that problem. As the African nations were the most vulnerable and the least able to combat the problems of desertification and drought without international assistance, Canada advocated a substantial convention with integrated regional annexes.

41. The United Nations Conference on Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks had held its first negotiating session in July 1993. Canada was among the countries urging participants to adopt a legally binding regime and a model for compulsory dispute settlement. Accepting such a legal regime would be a challenge, but the international community had no choice but to learn to fish responsibly; it must also enforce the moratorium on drift-net fishing. His delegation noted with concern reports of activities in the Mediterranean inconsistent with the terms of General Assembly resolution 46/215.

42. The United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) should result in a tangible programme of action to provide adequate shelter for all and develop sustainable human settlements in an urbanizing world. Forestry was another critical area and considerable effort should be devoted to preparations for the 1995 review of forests in the Commission on Sustainable Development. Canada welcomed the proposal to establish an intergovernmental task force on forests.

43. Although much had been achieved in the area of sustainable development during the past year, integrating sustainable development into everyday life involved a profound shift in values on the part of individuals, Governments and nations. The world was now facing the consequences of having lived beyond its economic means for too long. That error must not be compounded by living beyond its environmental means. In the quest for sustainable development the most powerful tool was the spirit of international cooperation and partnership.

44. Mr. BIAOU (Benin) said that Benin had acceded to the Vienna Convention for the Protection of the Ozone Layer and the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer during 1993, and that constitutional procedures for the ratification of four other international instruments in the environment field had been initiated. He urged the General Assembly to adopt a resolution prohibiting the movement of hazardous wastes from industrialized countries to developing countries.

45. With regard to desertification and drought, the implementation of the Plan of Action to Combat Desertification and the United Nations Programme of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development had not met expectations in the Sudano-Sahelian region. The new international situation resulting from the end of the cold war could, however, result in greater resources to fight

(Mr. Biaou, Benin)

desertification and drought, especially in view of the economic recovery noted in the industrialized countries. Without sufficient resources, the United Nations Sudano-Sahelian Office (UNSO) could not fulfil its mandate, which had been expanded in the light of the recommendations of the Earth Summit. Benin was concerned by the trends evident in the current GEF negotiations which might lead to insufficient financing for projects to combat drought.

46. The organizational session of the Preparatory Committee for the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements and the fourteenth session of the Commission on Human Settlements had made it clear that it would be practically impossible to reach the goal of shelter for all by the year 2000. Recognizing that shelter was a basic element of an individual's well-being, the international community should support efforts to provide housing for the most vulnerable groups through technical assistance and the establishment of financing mechanisms for specific housing programmes.

47. Benin was pleased that the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee for an international convention to combat desertification had met and hoped that the Second Committee would adopt by consensus the relevant draft resolution proposed for submission to the General Assembly. Some corrections to the French version of the text would be required, however, to bring it into conformity with the English version. His delegation also welcomed the meetings of the Preparatory Committee for the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States.

48. While his delegation accepted the moratorium established by the United Nations Conference on Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks, it believed that the goals had not been fully met. Moreover, the non-participation of many developing countries - especially the least developed countries - because of insufficient resources had prevented the debate from being truly universal.

49. One year after the Earth Summit and the first session of the Commission on Sustainable Development, new and additional financial resources for environmental activities had not been provided at the desired level. That situation was a cause for concern, as inaction posed yet another threat to the survival of the planet.

50. Mrs. des ILES (Trinidad and Tobago), speaking on behalf of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), thanked the Director of the Division of Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea for his lucid introduction of the reports of the Secretary-General relating to the United Conference on Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks. While the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea had anticipated the need for conservation measures based on cooperation among States, mechanisms applicable to the high seas had not been fully elaborated. In the case of straddling stocks, both coastal States and other States fishing on the high seas in areas adjacent to the exclusive economic zone were expected to agree upon the necessary measures either directly or through subregional or regional organizations. Thus high seas fishing had become one of the most pressing marine environmental issues on the international agenda.

(Mrs. des Iles, Trinidad and Tobago)

51. The Caribbean Community continued to hold the view that fish stocks and other living marine resources constituted one of the most important renewable resources, one which must be preserved for the benefit of future generations. For many CARICOM nationals, fishing was a way of life, and the fisheries industry was an important subsector in their economies. Community members would therefore give their full support to efforts to promote responsible fishing and sustainable management of fisheries resources.

52. The members of the Caribbean Community were encouraged by the progress made during the first substantive session of the United Nations Conference on Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks. The Conference had already identified and assessed existing problems related to conservation and management of such stocks and had acknowledged the provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea as the legal framework within which management regimes must be developed. The recognition that the movement of fish species in the world's oceans and seas was limited only by their biological and physical characteristics rather than by artificial boundaries should also facilitate the Conference's work.

53. The emerging regional approaches to cooperation in the management of marine resources were practical steps which should institutionalize cooperation between coastal States and other States fishing within the region and offered possibilities for satisfactory dispute settlement and enforcement. There could be no effective global network to preserve fisheries resources without the full participation of developing countries, although for many of those countries a substantial enhancement of their capacity would be required.

54. The members of the Caribbean Community had joined the consensus on the three recommendations submitted to the General Assembly by the Conference. The international community must continue to promote the responsible use and preservation of fisheries resources, and the final compromise arrived at by the Conference should be universal in scope. Consequently, all fishing States and coastal States must be encouraged to participate in the Conference, and the participation of developing countries must be facilitated.

55. Mr. VÍLCHEZ ASHER (Nicaragua), speaking on behalf of the Central American countries expressed concern that the developing countries' need for fresh resources could not be met by the financial arrangements established within the framework of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, including GEF and Capacity 21. The Central American countries understood the financial constraints on the industrialized countries, but in view of the accelerating degradation of the biosphere, the financing of a new international ecological order was imperative. To that end, the international financial institutions and multilateral development banks should also formulate more flexible macroeconomic policies.

56. The Central American countries welcomed the holding of the session of the Intergovernmental Committee on the Convention on Biological Diversity following the signing of the Convention. They hoped that the session would lead to the convening of the first Conference of the Parties to the Convention, in which they were anxious to participate.

(Mr. Vílchez Asher, Nicaragua)

57. The Central American Commission on Environment and Development (CCAD) had been one of the first regional bodies to be established as a result of the peace process initiated at Esquipulas in 1987. In June 1992, the countries of the region had signed the Central American Convention on Biological Diversity and the Central American Convention on Climate Change and, subsequently, the Rio declarations and conventions, which they had since ratified or were in the process of ratifying. In addition, the Tegucigalpa Protocol to the Charter of the Organization of Central American States called for joint activities for environmental preservation and development. CCAD, UNEP and the Central American Governments had elaborated a draft basic law on the environment and sustainable development in consultation with regional experts. That text had been endorsed by the Central American Parliament and had served as a model for the environmental legislation that Central American countries had begun to introduce.

58. The Governments of the Central American countries had launched an integrated regional programme on environment and health in conjunction with the Pan-American Health Organization (PAHO). In that context, they had held two conferences which had seen the adoption of country-specific development plans and programmes. Linkages between the environment and other fields had also been established. For example, the Central American Inter-Parliamentary Commission on Environment and Development (CICAD), composed of the presidents of national environment and natural resource commissions and legislative bodies, was seeking to incorporate the legislative dimension into sustainable development. At the thirteenth Presidential Summit, held in Panama in November 1992, regional agreements had been concluded on the transboundary movement of hazardous waste. The Presidential Summit held in Guatemala in October 1993 had adopted a regional convention on the management and conservation of natural forest ecosystems and the development and planting of forests. The convention stressed the potential for forest development in Central America and the wide diversity of species in the isthmus' tropical forests - the greatest variety in the world.

59. In striking contrast to that natural wealth were the more than 20 million Central Americans who lived in poverty, two thirds of them in rural areas. Poverty was aggravated by the deterioration of forests and local environments. Mounting external debt and low commodity prices further impaired those countries' capacity to make long-term investments in the sustainable development of natural resources. Central American soils were currently in danger of being over-exploited as a result of the cultivation of crops that could rapidly generate the currency needed for debt-servicing.

60. His delegation hoped that the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) would take into account the relationship between human settlements on the one hand and poverty and environmental deterioration on the other, and that it would formulate a plan of action to address the problems created by that situation. Preparatory activities for the review of the provisions of Agenda 21 relating to forestry, to be conducted by the Commission on Sustainable Development in 1995, should be expanded. In that connection, the Central American countries welcomed the Malaysian proposal to establish an intergovernmental group on forestry questions.

(Mr. Vílchez Asher, Nicaragua)

61. Composed of representatives of Governments and environmental organizations, the Central American Council for Protected Areas had been established to monitor the implementation of the Central American Convention on Biological Diversity. The vastness of Central America's protected areas demonstrated how important the environmental component was in the establishment of peace and democracy in the region. The Central American countries were increasingly taking part in international forums to express their views on environmental issues. They wished to reiterate their hope that the financial commitments made at Rio de Janeiro would be honoured and that new and additional resources would be provided to ensure the implementation of the Rio agreements.

62. Mr. STEER (World Bank) recalled that, at the first session of the Commission on Sustainable Development the World Bank had presented a fourfold agenda defining its role in the follow-up to the Rio Conference. The first task on the agenda was to assist member countries in environmental stewardship. Since the Earth Summit the World Bank had committed a record $2 billion for projects specifically designed to strengthen countries' capacities for environmental management, nearly doubling its commitments and increasing its lending 30-fold. That trend was expected to continue.

63. Many of the Bank's borrowers accorded high priority to environmental issues. More than 100 Bank-financed environmental or forestry projects were currently being implemented in over 50 countries, representing Bank commitments of some $5 billion and total investments of almost $13 billion. An increasing number of those investments were being utilized to implement environmental action plans, which had been completed or were being prepared in almost all the recipient countries of the International Development Association (IDA). The World Bank was prepared to play a strong financial and advisory role in the implementation of the plans.

64. The Bank's second task was to assess and mitigate adverse impacts of Bank-financed projects. In the period following the Rio Conference, the Bank had strengthened its capacity to make environmental and social assessments and had learned some hard lessons. Much remained to be done in that area, and the Bank was working to build capacity for environmental assessment and analysis at the country level. It was also conducting a comprehensive review of all resettlement components of Bank-financed projects.

65. The third element of the agenda involved building on the positive links between development and the environment. The guiding principles in that endeavour were that reducing poverty and developing human resources were essential for environmental sustainability and that promoting the efficient use of resources benefited both the environment and the economy. Since the Rio Conference, the Bank had actively sought to expand its activities on both fronts.

66. The fourth task was to help countries address global environmental challenges, primarily through the Bank's role as an implementing agency for GEF. The past 12 months had been crucial for GEF, and it was hoped that a restructured and financially replenished facility would emerge from the meeting

(Mr. Steer)

of more than 70 Governments to be held at Cartagena, Colombia, in early December. Donor countries had already agreed on a target of $2 billion for GEF II, an amount that was 2.5 times the Facility's current size. It was hoped that questions relating to the Facility's governance would be resolved at Cartagena.

67. The Bank was building its skills base in order to equip itself for the tasks it had assumed. The number of environmental specialists working at the Bank had increased from less than 10 in 1986 to the current figure of 200. The Bank was also building partnerships with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), UNEP and other agencies that had complementary skills and experience to offer, and with the Inter-Agency Committee on Sustainable Development. The Bank also hoped to draw on the expertise of NGOs much more than it had in the past. More importantly, it was taking a more participatory approach to its activities in the field.

68. The World Bank had been actively working with the secretariat of the Commission on Sustainable Development, UNDP and UNEP to define ways of improving coordination and cooperation among donors, agencies and developing countries at a time of increasing demands on scarce resources. The Bank believed it could play a constructive partnership role within the United Nations system in the preparation of an international convention on desertification and had published a document that could help countries design and implement cost-effective policies to control land degradation.

69. The Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States offered another opportunity for partnership. The Bank was already actively assisting small island developing countries and had recently prepared a paper enumerating the services it could provide to them. A more detailed account of World Bank activities in the field of the environment had been circulated to Second Committee members.

70. Mr. RONNENBERG (Marshall Islands) said that his delegation fully supported the statements made at the 36th meeting by the representatives of Colombia, on behalf of the Group of 77, Vanuatu, on behalf of the Alliance of Small Island States, and New Zealand, on behalf of the members of the South Pacific Forum that were also States Members of the United Nations.

71. The deliberations of the United Nations Conference on Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks had been followed closely by his delegation. The fact that so many Pacific delegations had attended demonstrated the importance the region attached to the Conference. As much remained to be done, his delegation endorsed the decision taken by the Conference at its second session to hold two further sessions in 1994. Unfortunately, the scheduling of those sessions conflicted with the third session of the Preparatory Committee for the International Conference on Population and Development and with a religious holiday observed by certain delegations. It was to be hoped that greater flexibility would be shown by the larger delegations in the future so that such scheduling conflicts could be avoided.

(Mr. Ronnenberg, Marshall Islands)

72. His delegation hoped that agenda item 99 (c) would be included in the agenda of the forty-ninth session of the General Assembly under its full title.

73. Drawing attention to the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, he noted the record attendance by the Pacific delegations at the Preparatory Committee for the Conference. As there had been insufficient time for a full discussion and negotiations, his delegation agreed with the representative of Vanuatu that a resumed session of the Preparatory Committee should begin with negotiations. Priority should be accorded to completing the action programme and beginning work on a final declaration. The Marshall Islands had prepared a National Environmental Management Strategy which covered a wide range of issues that would be considered by the Conference and would form the basis for the country's follow-up to the Barbados Conference.

74. The draft resolutions to be submitted under agenda items 99 (b) and 99 (c) were the fruit of much hard work, and he hoped they would be adopted without a vote. His delegation also wished to express its gratitude to those countries which had helped to enable the developing countries to participate in the sessions of the Preparatory Committees for the two conferences, and urged countries in a position to do so to make further contributions to the relevant voluntary funds.

75. Mr. BETI (Observer for Switzerland) said that the proceedings of the first session of the Commission on Sustainable Development had been satisfactory, particularly the discussions in the high-level meeting. The high-level meeting should be maintained and strengthened through, inter alia, genuinely flexible, interactive debate, fewer general statements and innovative guidance of the kind provided by the Commission's Chairman at the first session. The practice of elaborating a final statement along the lines of the Chairman's summary prepared for the first session should be continued.

76. One of the most important messages of the Rio Conference had been that consistency was more vital than ever, both within the United Nations system and at the level of national and international policy. The Commission on Sustainable Development should provide a forum for such consistency at a high political level. In an effort to achieve consistency at the national level, his Government had established a flexible, horizontal mechanism for the coordination of sectoral sustainable development policies in which non-governmental bodies could also participate.

77. In preparing for the second session of the Commission, widespread use should be made of a composite sustainability indicator, the need for which was becoming increasingly obvious. The complexity of the sustainability question must also be reduced. His delegation welcomed the preliminary work done in that regard by the United Nations and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). With regard to the Commission's information requirements, a "peer review" mechanism which operated on a voluntary basis would greatly enhance the transparency and effectiveness of the Commission's work.

(Mr. Beti, Observer, Switzerland)

78. His delegation would participate actively in the elaboration of an international convention to combat desertification and would support its ad hoc secretariat. The draft resolution before the Committee on that subject was the fruit of very difficult negotiations conducted at the most recent session of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee, and reopening that consensus text to discussion might impede the work of that body. His delegation hoped that the main text of the Convention and the annex on Africa would be completed by the June 1994 deadline set by the General Assembly and that the elaboration of other regional instruments, particularly those for Asia and Latin America, would progress rapidly. He was not opposed to "interim arrangements" if a prompt start was made. The idea could then be considered further at the Committee's third session, taking into account the content of the Convention once it was more clearly established.

79. His delegation did not support the opening of a new window in the Global Environment Facility to finance projects to combat desertification. Existing facilities and windows, particularly those for biological diversity and climate, could be used to finance activities to combat desertification. In any case, the opening of a new window should not be contemplated until the Facility's restructuring had been completed. Switzerland's long-standing support for a convention to combat desertification could be seen in its secondment of an expert to the ad hoc secretariat, its contributions to the Trust Fund for Preparatory Activities, its organization of courses in negotiating skills for members of the Preparatory Committee for the Rio Conference, and the location of the ad hoc secretariat in Geneva free of charge.

80. Mr. CUI Tiankai (China) said that the developed countries should fulfil their commitments under the Rio agreements to increase ODA, create a favourable international economic environment, provide new and additional financial resources for environmental protection, and transfer environmentally sound technologies to the developing countries on favourable terms.

81. His delegation welcomed the decision by the Commission on Sustainable Development to establish two intersessional working groups. Those bodies should conduct in-depth studies on the developing countries' needs and the reasons for their lack of access to resources and technology. His delegation hoped that a forward-looking approach would be taken in the final stages of the restructuring and replenishment of GEF.

82. He welcomed the work done by the Preparatory Committee for the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee for the Elaboration of an International Convention to Combat Desertification and the United Nations Conference on Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks. Those three forums should be given due attention by the international community.

83. His delegation supported the formulation of an action-oriented and viable action programme that was adapted to the unique situation of small island developing States, and based on the Rio agreements. Despite the progress achieved in that regard at the first substantive session of the Preparatory

(Mr. Cui Tiankai, China)

Committee for the Conference, differences persisted over the preamble of the final document and the section on implementation. He therefore hoped that the Second Committee would agree to the proposal to hold a resumed session of the Preparatory Committee.

84. Referring to the work of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee on desertification, he said that the developed countries should provide new and additional financial resources to help the developing countries fulfil their obligations under the future desertification convention, including the implementation of national and regional programmes. Surely, agreement could be reached before June 1994 if all parties adopted a positive, flexible and practical approach.

85. His delegation supported the goals of the United Nations Conference on Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks. Countries should participate in the Conference on an equal footing and negotiate in good faith within the framework of General Assembly resolution 47/192 and the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. The outcome of the negotiations should take into account the special needs of the developing countries, which should be able to fish on the high seas without discrimination and with the support of international agencies and the developed countries.

86. His Government, which had always attached importance to environmental protection, had begun to study ways and means of following up the Rio Conference almost immediately. In September 1992, it had promulgated a 10-point environment and development strategy which took into account Agenda 21 and China's specific situation. In November 1992, the National Peoples Congress had ratified the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Convention on Biological Diversity, and a Committee on Environmental Protection had been established in early 1993.

87. Ms. ASHRAF (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)) said that, because of its broad mandate and long experience, UNESCO was involved in many aspects of the follow-up to the Rio Conference, with particular emphasis on Agenda 21, the Convention on Biological Diversity and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. UNESCO had sought to reorient its existing programmes, revising strategies and action plans which had subsequently been endorsed by a number of intergovernmental bodies in the environmental field and by the advisory bodies for the programmes of UNESCO's Division of Earth Sciences.

88. UNESCO had launched four intersectoral initiatives that would establish new directions across established programme lines: sustainable development, biological diversity, capacity-building and environment and development information. The Director-General had appointed a committee of outside experts to promote those initiatives.

89. In the meetings on follow-up to the Rio Conference, the Inter-Agency Committee on Sustainable Development had appointed UNESCO Task Manager for coordination within the United Nations system of activities relating to two chapters of Agenda 21 that dealt with science and education. UNESCO had

(Ms. Ashraf, UNESCO)

established focal points with NGOs and other organizations for the exchange of information in order to implement the environmental education elements of Agenda 21.

90. Agenda 21 stressed the key role of education and the sciences, including the social and human sciences in achieving sustainable development. Culture and communication, the two other areas of UNESCO competence, could also make a major contribution to that end. The follow-up to the Rio Conference was changing the United Nations system as a whole and the work of UNESCO in particular. UNESCO activities in the areas of desertification and drought, the sustainable development of small island developing countries and the United Nations Conference on Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks were described in detail in a longer text which she had circulated to delegations.

91. Mr. AL THANI (Qatar) said that environmental degradation was one of the major challenges facing mankind. There was increasing recognition of the adverse environmental impact of certain human activities, particularly in the industrial countries, and of the importance of modifying such activities so that nature could recover its vitality. Various conventions and protocols had been concluded or were under negotiation on such issues as the ozone layer, the control of transboundary movements of hazardous wastes, and large-scale pelagic drift-net fishing. In that connection, he welcomed the decision to convene the United Nations Conference on Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks.

92. With the world's population expected to grow as high as 10 billion while natural resources remained limited, man could not continue to destroy the life-giving attributes of the planet by polluting the atmosphere, poisoning the water supply and exhausting the soil. Qatar shared the concerns of other countries regarding the environment and supported all international efforts in that field. His country had enacted legislation and established institutions for the protection of the environment, in particular the sea. Qatar had acceded to a number of regional and international conventions on pollution, particularly oil pollution, and was endeavouring to heighten environmental awareness, especially in the wake of the environmental catastrophe caused by the Gulf crisis. His country had signed - and hoped shortly to ratify - the Convention on Biodiversity and was examining the other protocols relating to that issue.

93. Drought and desertification threatened some 900 million of the planet's population, particularly in the arid and semi-arid regions of Africa. Chapter 12 of Agenda 21 had laid new foundations for international cooperation to combat those problems. He expressed his appreciation for the work of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee for the Elaboration of an International Convention to Combat Desertification in those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, particularly in Africa at its second session and hoped that the Committee might complete its work within the specified time-frame.

94. In conclusion, he urged Member States to continue to broaden international cooperation on the environment while making optimum use of the possibilities afforded by technological progress, and to ensure that environmental

(Mr. Al Thani, Qatar)

considerations were taken into account in development plans. All efforts should be made to halt adverse trends and to provide ample technical and financial assistance to the countries most affected by environmental degradation.

95. Ms. BELMAR (Mexico), speaking on agenda item 99, said that genuine commitments to enhance cooperation and incorporate the concept of sustainable development as a basic feature of national economic strategies were essential. Environmental issues should be viewed in a broad context within the framework of development strategies.

96. In view of the major challenges facing the Commission for Sustainable Development, an adequate infrastructure was needed to enable it to carry out its work. The high-level segment of Commission sessions should continue to provide a forum for a political dialogue by national officials responsible for development and environmental strategies.

97. The establishment of working groups on financing and the transfer of technology would significantly contribute to the implementation of the agreements reached at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, provided that the working groups focused on specific topics in Agenda 21. Discussions on financing should identify ways to involve the Bretton Woods institutions and the Global Environmental Facility. A cross-sectoral approach to financing should be adopted. She was pleased to announce that her Government would be able to prepare its report in time for the next substantive session of the Commission.

98. She welcomed the progress achieved by the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee for the elaboration of an international convention to combat desertification; while drought and desertification certainly were priority concerns for Africa, the global character of the proposed convention must be borne in mind.

99. The forthcoming Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States would focus on the vulnerability of those States to climate change. Her delegation fully supported their efforts to achieve sustainable development and agreed that conditionality should not be a factor in the allocation of financial resources for that purpose.

100. With regard to the United Nations Conference on Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks, she endorsed the view that high seas fisheries should be governed by the principles of the United Nations Conference on the Law of the Sea. She also welcomed the progress made in an international code of conduct for responsible fishing, which should take into account developments in the law of the sea, in particular, regarding the sovereignty of coastal States and their resources within the exclusive economic zone.

101. In conclusion, her delegation was confident that a spirit of good will and compromise would prevail in the negotiations to implement the agreements reached at UNCED.

The meeting rose at 1.15 p.m.